



## Anger Takes a Holiday: 'Blood Transfusion for a Ghost' at PS1

by *aimee walleston* 06/22/09

On Saturday night, it seemed as though filmmaker Kenneth Anger had, like Zeus, sprouted an Athena in the form of American artist Frank Haines. Haines's celebration of the summer solstice, *Blood Transfusion for a Ghost*, was a big, bright aesthetic mess, met with ritual noise and pagan glee. Organized in collaboration with Kate McNamara and MoMA's Poprally series, the night featured performances by curator Mark Beasley (who is at the helm of Creative Time's soon-to-open group show *This World & Nearer Ones*, held on Governors Island), filmmaker Rose Kallal, poet Cedar Sigo, and the band *Miracle of Birth* (which one attendee described as "intellectualized heavy metal"). The showstopper of the event, however, was Haines's own trio, *Blanko and Noiry*, which features legendary electronic music innovator (and septuagenarian) Chris Kachulis. The band has played at several art events in the past, including Pati Hertling's *Eva's Arche und der Feminist*, and their performances are nothing if not riveting. Amidst a set often composed completely in black and white (there are stalactites, stalagmites, and a smattering of black candles), the trio take occult ritual, electronic dissonance, and art history for a joyride. Saturday's performance included the emptying what appeared to be dinosaur eggs filled with paint onto an all-white-clad Haines, who has said that the performances are in part homage to the films made by the Vienna Actionists.

Kachulis's vaudevillian ghost attire and vaguely creepy crooning of Doo Wop hits, including "Under My Skin," was the icing on the Anger cake, so to speak. Not to mention, a very good complement to the survey of Anger films that remains on view at the museum until September 14th. In Anger's work, magic is both the ritual and the rabbit: deeply held belief systems are met with an acknowledgement of -- and affinity for -- the kitschy iconography magic conjures in Western thought. His forays into the teachings of Aleister Crowley were made hand-in-hand with explorations of sexuality and camp aesthetics (*Scorpio Rising* is as much a swirling homoerotic fantasia as it is a paganistic attempt to imbue inanimate motorbikes with humanistic sexual prowess). The great gift of Anger's work has always been the myriad conceptual inroads it makes for other artists: one finds another nascent devotee in art photographer David Benjamin Sherry, who curated the group show currently on view at Bellwether gallery and often cites Anger as an influence. Like Anger, Haines' work (the artist has a solo show of sculpture and paintings on view at Lisa Cooley Gallery until July 3rd.) is also deeply ingrained with religious inquiries. And, as is most firmly evident with his performances, Haines' art feels at once joyous and profane. Explorations into hermetic realms are always met, in the end with a big, bright, glow-in-the-dark smile.